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UNCLAS DJIBOUTI 000235

SIPDIS

State for AF, AF/E, AF/PD

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: PD LAUNCHES ENGLISH CONVERSATION GROUPS

REF: DJIBOUTI 180

1. (U) SUMMARY: This week, the Public Diplomacy section began implementing its plan to establish English conversation groups throughout the city. In addition, the section's poster show moved to a busy commercial venue, and the Embassy continued to receive excellent media coverage on its Black History Month and USAID projects. END SUMMARY
2. (U) Due to the popularity of English language learning, and the comparative lack of native speakers and English language products in Djibouti, the Public Diplomacy section has begun to establish a series of conversation groups, or "oral nights," through the city's 10 private English schools. The first of these groups recently commenced at the English Teacher's Association of Djibouti (ETAD), with the PAO participating as an example of native speaker.
3. The English language groups are scheduled to expand into the night schools next month. PD intends to supply native speakers for each of the groups on a bi-weekly basis in cooperation with volunteers from Camp Lemonier. We expect 30-60 people in each of the 10 schools will participate. The backgrounds of the students vary, but teachers estimate the majority of students are between the ages of 18-40.
4. In addition, PD has volunteered to assist the groups, which will be run by Djiboutian students or teachers, by providing printed articles in advance of each of the meetings. These articles will be available for each participating student and will serve as the framework for each discussion.
5. The PAO and PD Assistant also met with the director of Radio Television Djibouti this week to begin negotiations for a version of the English language conversation group for the radio. This weekly program would focus on American life and be moderated by an Embassy representative. It would accept questions via post that would be read and answered on the air by a native English speaker. There has been some discussion of tying the weekly theme of the program in with the weekly theme being pursued at the conversation groups in the private schools.
6. ETAD and PD efforts to bring the private school teachers together have also resulted in a working group about English language curriculum reform for the private night schools. The Public Diplomacy assistant is participating in that working group, in conjunction with the school directors.
7. PD this week closed its Black History month traveling poster show with its final installment at Djibouti Telecom (reftel). The Embassy is currently in negotiations with Djibouti Telecom, the government-owned phone and internet company, on a commercial matter. We believe the poster show, and the Ambassador's appearance at its inauguration, were useful good faith gestures. In addition, Djibouti Telecom is a very high traffic area for the public.
8. PD facilitated coverage of the March 2 inauguration of USAID's rehabilitation of Gabode Secondary School. The ribbon cutting by the Ambassador and the Minister of Education, Abdi Ibrahim Absieh, was showcased with nearly five minutes of coverage on the evening news and in a half page article in the local press.

Ragsdale